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HUQUQSHUNOS TALABALARDA TILGA ASOSLANGAN TOPSHIRIQLAR ORQALI TANQIDIY FIKRLASH KO'NIKMALARINI RIVOJLANTIRISH

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Annotatsiya

Ushbu maqolada yuridik ingliz tili darslarida tilga asoslangan topshiriqlar orqali huquqshunos talabalarida tanqidiy fikrlash ko'nikmalarini rivojlantirish masalasi tahlil qilinadi. Zamonaviy nazariy manbalarga tayangan holda, maqolada sud ishlarini tahlil qilish, huquqiy argumentatsiya va muammoli vaziyatlarni hal etishga qaratilgan topshiriqlar yuqori darajadagi fikrlash ko'nikmalarini rivojlantirishda samarali vosita ekanligi asoslanadi. Sifatli auditoriya tadqiqoti asosida topshiriqlarga asoslangan o'qitishning talabalarning analitik fikrlashiga ta'siri o'rganildi. Natijalar talabalar interpretatsiya, baholash va xulosa chiqarish ko'nikmalarining rivojlanganini ko'rsatadi. Maqolada yuridik ingliz tili kurslari uchun tanqidiy fikrlashni integratsiya qiluvchi metodik model taklif etiladi.

Kalit so'zlar: tanqidiy fikrlash; yuridik ingliz tili; topshiriq asosida o'qitish; huquqshunos talabalar; argumentatsiya.

РАЗВИТИЕ НАВЫКОВ КРИТИЧЕСКОГО МЫШЛЕНИЯ У СТУДЕНТОВ- ЮРИСТОВ С ПОМОЩЬЮ ЯЗЫКОВЫХ ЗАДАНИЙ

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Аннотация

В статье исследуется роль языковых заданий в развитии критического мышления у студентов юридических специальностей в рамках преподавания юридического английского языка. Опираясь на современные теоретические подходы к критическому мышлению и обучению второму языку, автор показывает, что структурированные задания (анализ судебных дел, правовая аргументация, решение проблемных ситуаций) являются эффективным средством формирования когнитивных навыков высокого уровня. В ходе качественного аудиторного исследования анализировалось, как обучение на основе заданий влияет на развитие аналитического мышления. Результаты показывают, что языковые задания способствуют развитию у студентов умений интерпретации, оценки и логического вывода. В статье предлагается педагогическая модель интеграции критического мышления в курс юридического английского языка.

Ключевые слова: критическое мышление; юридический английский; студенты-юристы; обучение на основе заданий; аргументация.

DEVELOPING CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS IN LAW STUDENTS THROUGH LANGUAGE TASKS

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Abstract

This article investigates the role of language-based tasks in fostering critical thinking skills among law students within Legal English instruction. Drawing on established theoretical frameworks in critical thinking and second language acquisition, the study argues that structured pedagogical tasks- such as case analysis, legal argumentation, and problem-solving- serve as effective tools for developing higher-order cognitive abilities. A qualitative classroom-based study was conducted with undergraduate law students to examine how task-based learning influences analytical reasoning. The findings reveal that language tasks can enhance students' abilities in interpretation, evaluation, and inference. The study contributes to English for Specific Purposes (ESP) pedagogy by proposing a structured framework for integrating critical thinking into Legal English curricula.

Keywords: critical thinking; Legal English; law students; task-based learning; argumentation; higher-order thinking.

The development of critical thinking is widely recognized as a fundamental objective of higher education, particularly in legal training. Law students are expected to demonstrate the ability to interpret legal texts, evaluate evidence, and construct well-reasoned arguments. However, in many Legal English classrooms, instruction remains focused primarily on linguistic competence, often overlooking the cultivation of higher-order cognitive skills.

Critical thinking has been defined as a purposeful and self-regulatory process involving interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation (Facione, 2011). Similarly, Paul and Elder (2006) conceptualize it as disciplined reasoning guided by intellectual standards such as clarity, accuracy, depth, and relevance. These competencies are essential in legal contexts, where reasoning and argumentation form the basis of professional practice.

Recent research emphasizes that critical thinking is best developed within domain-specific contexts rather than as a context-free, generic skill (Willingham, 2007; Ennis, 1989). Therefore, integrating critical thinking into Legal English instruction offers a promising way to enhance both language proficiency and legal reasoning skills simultaneously.

This article explores how language-based, task-oriented activities in Legal English courses can promote critical thinking among law students. It presents a classroom-based qualitative study conducted with undergraduate law students and proposes pedagogical implications for English for Legal Purposes.

Methodology

Participants

The participants were 24 first-year law students enrolled in a B2-level Legal English course at Tashkent State University of Law. All students had completed at least one year of general English instruction and an introductory course in law.

Data Collection

Data were collected from multiple qualitative sources:

- classroom observations
- students' written case analyses
- recorded group discussions
- reflective teaching journals

The use of multiple sources enabled triangulation and increased the credibility of the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Procedure

Over a four-week period, students engaged in a series of task-based activities, including:

- case analysis tasks based on authentic or adapted legal cases
- structured debates on controversial legal issues
- problem-solving scenarios requiring the application of legal rules to new fact patterns

These tasks were designed to correspond to the core critical thinking skills identified by Facione (2011), particularly interpretation, analysis, and evaluation, while also requiring meaningful use of English in legal contexts.

Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Transcripts of discussions, written assignments, and observation notes were coded for indicators of critical thinking, including:

- justification of claims with evidence
- consideration of alternative viewpoints
- identification of assumptions
- logical coherence of arguments

Emerging themes were then interpreted in relation to existing scholarship on critical thinking, legal education, and task-based language teaching.

Literature Review

Critical Thinking: Theoretical Perspectives

Critical thinking is a multidimensional construct encompassing both cognitive and metacognitive processes. Facione's (2011) Delphi report identifies six core skills: interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation, and self-regulation. Halpern (2014) likewise emphasizes that critical thinking involves the use of cognitive skills and strategies that increase the likelihood of achieving desirable outcomes in problem-solving and decision-making.

Bloom's original taxonomy (Bloom, 1956), as well as its later revisions, places analysis, evaluation, and creation among higher-order cognitive processes. However, several scholars argue that critical thinking is highly context-dependent and must be developed through discipline-specific practice rather than through general, abstract exercises alone (Ennis, 1989; Willingham, 2007). For law students, this means engaging directly with legal content, legal discourse, and legal problem-solving.

Critical Thinking in Legal Education

Legal education requires students to engage in complex reasoning processes such as statutory interpretation, case analysis, and analogical reasoning. Medina (2012) argues that law students must develop analytical and evaluative skills in order to interpret legal authorities and construct persuasive arguments. The IRAC method (Issue, Rule, Application, Conclusion) is widely used as a structured model of legal reasoning, guiding students through the systematic analysis of legal problems (LeClercq & Garrison, 2009).

Paul and Elder (2007) emphasize that critical thinking in law involves questioning assumptions, evaluating the quality of evidence, and recognizing logical fallacies. These skills are central not only to litigation and advisory work but also to ethical decision-making in legal practice.

Task-Based Learning and Critical Thinking

Task-based language teaching (TBLT) has been widely recognized as an effective approach in language education. Nunan (1999) defines tasks as activities that require learners to comprehend, manipulate, and produce language while focusing primarily on meaning rather than form. In TBLT, learners use the target language to achieve specific, real-world outcomes.

Empirical studies suggest that task-based learning can promote cognitive engagement and critical thinking by requiring learners to solve problems, negotiate meaning, and justify their positions (Arias-Rodríguez, 2014; Vanicheva et al., 2015). In Legal English contexts, tasks such as case analysis, role-plays of courtroom proceedings, and debates on legal reforms can simulate aspects of real legal practice, thereby enhancing both linguistic and cognitive competencies.

From a sociocultural perspective, language and thinking are fundamentally interconnected (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Through dialogic interaction and scaffolded tasks, students internalize higher mental functions, including critical and analytical thinking. This

suggests that carefully designed language tasks can serve as a powerful means of developing critical thinking in law students.

Discussion and Results

Case-Based Tasks

Case-based tasks were found to support the development of analytical skills. Students were required to identify relevant facts, extract legal issues, and apply appropriate legal rules. Over the four-week period, their written case analyses demonstrated:

- greater precision in distinguishing relevant from irrelevant facts
- more explicit references to legal principles and precedents
- clearer organization of arguments following IRAC-like structures

These developments indicate growth in interpretative and analytical competence, which is consistent with prior research on case-based instruction in law (Medina, 2012).

Argumentation and Debate

Structured debates on controversial legal topics, such as limitations on freedom of expression and the proportionality of punishments, encouraged students to construct and critique arguments in English. Analysis of oral transcripts revealed:

- increased use of discourse markers for argumentation, such as *however*, *on the other hand*, and *therefore*
- more frequent citation of hypothetical or real legal examples to support claims
- greater willingness to respond to counterarguments rather than simply repeating memorized statements

These findings align with research highlighting the role of argumentation in the development of critical thinking (Paul & Elder, 2007; Kuhn, 2019).

Problem-Solving Tasks

Problem-solving scenarios required students to apply legal concepts to novel fact patterns. Students engaged in analogical reasoning by comparing new situations with cases previously discussed in class, which is a key aspect of legal thinking (Gentner & Smith, 2012). Their group discussions showed:

- attempts to draw analogies and distinctions between cases
- collaborative evaluation of possible legal outcomes
- reflection on the fairness and policy implications of different solutions

Such activities helped bridge the gap between theoretical legal knowledge and practical reasoning.

Integration of Language and Cognition

The findings confirm that language and cognition are closely interconnected. As students' language proficiency and legal vocabulary developed, their ability to express complex reasoning in English became more sophisticated. This supports Vygotskian perspectives on the mediating role of language in cognitive development (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Students also reported in informal feedback that working in English required them to think more carefully about definitions, distinctions, and logical relationships, which in turn strengthened their overall legal understanding.

Despite the positive outcomes, several challenges were identified:

- limited vocabulary sometimes constrained students' ability to formulate nuanced arguments
- some students initially relied on memorized phrases rather than engaging in genuine reasoning
- time constraints in regular class schedules limited opportunities for extended debate and reflection

These challenges suggest that the development of critical thinking through language tasks requires sustained practice, explicit scaffolding, and a gradual increase in task complexity.

Based on the findings, the study suggests that Legal English instruction should:

- integrate case-based and problem-solving tasks that require interpretation, analysis, and evaluation of legal issues

- promote argumentation and debate on authentic or simulated legal controversies in order to foster reasoning and persuasion skills
- use scaffolding techniques, such as graphic organizers, guiding questions, model texts, and language frames for argumentation
- balance focus on language form and cognitive development, ensuring that accuracy supports rather than replaces higher-order thinking
- encourage reflective activities, such as learning journals or debriefing discussions, to help students become aware of their own thinking processes

This study demonstrates that language-based tasks can be effective in developing critical thinking skills among law students in Legal English courses. By integrating task-based approaches that mirror authentic legal reasoning, educators can foster both language proficiency and higher-order thinking skills. The findings highlight the importance of designing pedagogical activities that engage students in meaningful and cognitively demanding tasks such as case analysis, structured debate, and legal problem-solving. Future research could adopt mixed-methods or quantitative designs to measure changes in critical thinking more precisely and to compare the effectiveness of different task types. Longitudinal studies would also be valuable for examining the sustained impact of task-based instruction on law students' academic and professional performance.

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